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Motorists to use caution and share the road with farm equipment during harvest

Harvest season is underway throughout the state and the North Dakota Department of Transportation (NDDOT) is urging motorists to use caution as large farm equipment is out on the roadways this time of year.

“Motorists should be extremely cautious as they drive, especially on rural, two-lane roads, as slow moving farm equipment is out on the roadways,” says Mark Nelson, NDDOT Deputy Director. “Most crashes are due to inattention, speeding and unsafe passing. When approaching farm equipment, motorists need to pay attention, slow down and pass with extreme caution.”

Farm equipment is very large and heavy making it extremely difficult for operators to accelerate, slow down and stop. These vehicles also have large blind spots, making it difficult for operators to see approaching vehicles.

In 2015, there were 54 crashes in North Dakota involving farm equipment. “By taking extra precautions on the roadway and safely sharing the road with farm equipment, crashes can be prevented,” stresses Nelson.

Motorists are reminded to:

- Watch for mud and debris on the roadway as trucks go directly from the field onto the highway.
- Be aware that you can encounter farm equipment at any time of day.
- Drive with headlights on at all times.
- Wear seatbelts.

In addition, farmers are reminded of the opportunity to get 10 percent extra weight permits that can be issued to expedite the first haul of farm products during harvest and for the collection and transport of sugar beets and potatoes. Additionally, farmers should be aware that road construction projects are finishing up this time of year as well. Some roads may be inaccessible to large farm equipment.

Farm equipment operators should consider the following precautions:

- Use lights and flashers to make equipment more visible.
- Use slow moving emblems on equipment traveling less than 30 mph.
- Consider using a follow vehicle when moving equipment, especially at night.

For the most current progress on construction projects call 511 or go to the Travel Information Map on the NDDOT website at www.dot.nd.gov.